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SUBJECT: MFA ON UNOMIG FAILURE, NEXT STEPS

Classified By: Acting POL M/C David Kostelancik for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: MFA IVth CIS Deputy Director Dvinyanin told us UNOMIG renewal talks failed in part due to the West's rigid response to Russia's earlier OSCE proposals, which caused Moscow to "tighten" its position on UNOMIG. Dvinyanin described Russia's concurrence with UNSCR 1866, which referenced UNSCR 1808 in support of Georgia's territorial integrity, a "mistake." Now it was "fair" for Russia to insist on removing a reference to UNSCR 1808 from the UNOMIG resolution. Russia argued that its approach to the Georgian conflict, post-collapse of the international mandates, is based on assistance to South Ossetia and Abkhazia in accordance with the September 2008 Big Treaties. DFM Karasin said in an interview that, while Russia would guarantee security in the breakaway regions, Moscow hoped that the EU monitoring mission would continue to operate in Georgia proper. Russia still supported the Geneva talks and the Joint Incident Prevention Mechanism, but according to Dvinyanin saw the Geneva Process as a vehicle to increase the breakaway regions' international exposure. Parliament members supported Russia's UNOMIG veto, while analysts noted the influence of internal politics and the Sochi Olympic Games on Russia's policy in Georgia. End Summary.

Gloomy mood

¶2. (SBU) In a June 18 Kommersant interview, DFM Grigoriy Karasin described the "gloomy mood" in the GOR after the failure to extend the UNOMIG mission, lamenting that Russia's proposals in New York, as earlier in Vienna regarding the OSCE mission, had "not been heard." He said Russia feared that as a result the GOG would use an incident in the breakaway regions to start a new political offensive on the regions' status. However, Russia would not "panic." In the meantime, Russian forces would guarantee stability in the breakaway regions, while the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM) would do the same in Georgia proper, and the Joint Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (JIPRM) would continue its work. Karasin hoped that Georgia would focus its energy on "quietly building up positive and respectful relations" with the regions, and that Russia-Georgia relations could similarly become "normal and friendly," once the Georgian leadership had changed. Karasin said he would discuss next steps with the EU's Pierre Morel when he visited Moscow June ¶23.

Western rigidity in OSCE caused Russian rigidity in UN

¶3. (C) MFA IVth CIS Deputy Director Alexei Dvinyanin told us June 18 that the West's harsh response to Russia's OSCE proposal, which "P.O.ed" Russia, caused Russia to "tighten up" its position on UNOMIG renewal and take a "more rigid" approach in New York. Reiterating that Russia was sincere in

its desire for observers to stay, most recently restated with regard to the OSCE monitors by MFA spokesman Nesterenko June 18, Dvinyanin noted the June 15 and 16 MFA statements Dvinyanin himself had drafted. In them, he had argued that the West had "no right" to reproach Russia with the "lack of desire to seek a compromise." Russia instead placed the responsibility for ending the UNOMIG mandate "entirely on its partners."

"We made a mistake in agreeing to UNSCR 1866"

¶4. (C) Dvinyanin stressed Russia had shown "maximum flexibility" in negotiations. He rejected our suggestion that the West had offered as a compromise to exchange the naming of the UN mission for a reference to UNSCR 1808's support for Georgia's territorial integrity, but had encountered no willingness to negotiate in return. As an example, Dvinyanin pointed to long internal negotiations between the MFA and MOD to get agreement on symmetrical security and restricted zones, which the MFA argued to the MOD was necessary out of "fairness to the other side." In addition, Russia considered all of the numbers it proposed for troop strengths and equipment to be negotiable. However, Dvinyanin claimed it was only "fair" if Moscow insisted on a non-negotiable basis that all references to Georgia's territorial integrity be absent, as the West had conversely insisted that the presence of such a clause be non-negotiable.

¶5. (C) When pressed that Russia had agreed to UNSCR 1808, so
MOSCOW 00001621 002 OF 003

could hardly reject its mention, Dvinyanin said Russia had "changed its mind" in the last four months, adding, "If it goes down better, tell Washington we made a mistake" in February 2009 when Moscow voted for UNSCR 1866, which referenced UNSCR 1808.

¶6. (C) In response to our query why Russia considered it fair to insist on status views that only Russia and Nicaragua held, while the rest of the world objected, Dvinyanin argued that according to Russian interpretation, a country was considered recognized once another country recognized it. He underscored that the West needed to understand that Kremlin decision makers had been "insulted" by the West's request that the GOR withdraw its recognition of the breakaway Georgian regions.

¶7. (C) Despite Russian accusations of Georgian rearmament, Dvinyanin said Moscow was not concerned about the possibility of rising tensions due to the withdrawal of OSCE and UN observers. Russia did not fear Georgia, Dvinyanin said, and added that once Russian border guards had "sealed off" the administrative border lines, he was confident that incidents would stop. Dvinyanin openly called the GOR's bluster of Georgian rearmament "propaganda," which he claimed was "understandable" for Moscow to make.

All hopes on EU

¶8. (C) In view of next steps, Dvinyanin said Russia was pinning its hopes on cooperation with the EU, as begun in the Sarkozy-Medvedev agreements in August and September 2008. Echoing Karasin's statements, he said Russia wanted a continued EUMM presence in Georgia proper, but realized it could not dictate Brussels' decision. In part thanks to MFA pressure on the MOD, Russia now sought a two-pronged cooperation with the EUMM, both bilaterally and via the JIPRM. If Brussels were to decide to terminate the EUMM, Dvinyanin offered his personal opinion that Russia would respond negatively.

Long-term plans based on Big Treaties

¶9. (C) According to Dvinyanin, Russia's long-term view for the conflict regions was based on the continuation of cooperation agreed upon in the September 2008 Big Treaties with the breakaway regions. This cooperation included border protection and military, financial, economic, humanitarian, and administrative assistance. Dvinyanin welcomed outside assistance, including from the OSCE and UN, for these intentions. He underscored Abkhazia's interest in a UN presence for reconstruction purposes, and foresaw the same interest in South Ossetia for an OSCE presence with the same purpose.

¶10. (C) Dvinyanin explained the genesis of the sentence in the June 16 MFA statement he had drafted, which announced Russia would review "the new risks arising out of the situation owing to the absence of other key restraining elements of international monitoring, and the requirements for additional measures to reinforce security." Noting that the Abkhaz had requested this review, he emphasized the review did "not necessarily" mean troop levels would increase. He added that the same statement would also be the subject of the June 23 Karasin-Morel meeting, per those officials' June 17 phone conversation.

¶11. (C) Dvinyanin therefore saw no contradiction between the security review and Russian General Staff Makarov's June 17 announcement that Russia would reduce the number of troops in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Troop numbers had already been reduced from 3,700 in each region as FSB border guards were introduced, so that the combined total did not exceed 3,700 per region. The number of FSB guards was capped at 1,300 in Abkhazia and 930 in South Ossetia. Dvinyanin predicted troop numbers would drop below the self-imposed maxima, bottoming out at less than 2,000 in each region. Russian army bases were in Gadauta in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali in South Ossetia. Dvinyanin linked Medvedev's June 13 orders to prepare military agreements with South Ossetia and Abkhazia to the Big Treaties.

July 1 Geneva Talks still on

¶12. (C) Dvinyanin said that Russia wanted to continue the Geneva Process, and was drafting its own papers for the next

MOSCOW 00001621 003 OF 003

meeting July 1. These included proposals for a non-use of force agreement in the 1st Working Group on security, which Russia would only sign as a mediator/guarantor, but not as a party, and several proposals "based on standard UNHCR guidelines" for the 2nd Working Group on humanitarian issues. He explained that the South Ossetian and Abkhazian delegations had complained to Russia that only the West was submitting proposals in Geneva. However, South Ossetia was now drafting its own non-use of force proposal to present in the July meeting.

¶13. (C) When asked about reports that the breakaway regions might not attend the July 1 meetings, Dvinyanin said Moscow would try to convince South Ossetia and Abkhazia that they benefited from the talks. However, he argued that their benefits lay in the "international exposure" they would receive, and did not mention the value of direct talks with the GOG or agreements the Working Groups might negotiate.

Plans for Incident Prevention Mechanism

¶14. (C) Dvinyanin also confirmed that Russia welcomed the continuation of the JIPRM for South Ossetia, and would lean

on Abkhazia to launch its own JIPRM. He said South Ossetia's demand to resolve the kidnapping of 3 South Ossetians as a pre-condition for JIPRM talks did not make sense, as the JIPRM was the appropriate venue to discuss this very issue.

¶15. (C) Regarding the format of the JIPRM meetings, Dvinyanin questioned whether the OSCE and UN would be willing to regularly fly in representatives from Vienna or New York. Moscow considered Russia and the EU to be the main mediators, as the JIPRM was based on the Sarkozy-Medvedev agreements.

Duma supports MFA views

¶16. (SBU) Parliament members in the meantime supported Russia's veto of the UNOMIG resolution. Chairman of the Federation Council's Committee on Foreign Affairs Mikhail Margelov stated that Germany's draft rollover resolution confirmed Georgia's territorial integrity, which "de facto did not exit any longer," but stated Russia's interest in a UN mission to enhance the "inviolability" of Abkhazia's "border." Chairman of the Duma Foreign Affairs Committee Konstantin Kosachev blamed Georgia for the failure to renew the UNOMIG mandate, accusing the GOG of pressuring UNSC member states.

Analysts

¶17. (C) While analyst Svetlana Samoylova underlined that Moscow's veto of the UNOMIG extension did not benefit Moscow, MGIMO deputy Dean Mikhail Troitsky called it "logical" for Russia to try to use the international missions to make its own case, while refusing to let the missions' presence "isolate" the breakaway regions. Although the regions constituted a "liability" for Russia, he doubted the GOR had an exit strategy for its involvement there before the 2014 Olympic Games in Sochi. Carnegie Center's Andrey Ryabov noted that Russia's hard-line position in New York was influenced by Russia's internal politics, which made an inflexible approach desirable in order to demonstrate Russia's "resolute power" to detractors. Alexander Karavaev and MGU's Alexey Vlasov agreed with the MOD's view that the UNOMIG withdrawal had "no impact," as it had played "no special role" in the stabilization process.

Comment

¶18. (C) Moscow's willingness to let the UNOMIG mission fail is a consequence of its vision for the region with "independent" states in Moscow's orbit as a thorn in Georgian President Saakashvili's side. We judge that Russia will be willing to bear the cost of the regions' corruption, criminality, and thirst for monetary support at least until both the Sochi Olympics are over and Saakashvili is gone.
BEYRLE